

A great speech can be easily derailed by a few poor presentation choices. By avoiding these “Top 10 Mistakes,” you will become a much more effective public speaker.

- 1 Do not leave your cell phone on. Turn the phone off completely, as any vibration or ringtone can be a distraction from a great speech.
- 2 Do not mumble. Take your hands away from your mouth and speak clearly with confidence. Articulate your words clearly.
- 3 Do not look down the entire time you are speaking. It makes you look as if you don't care about the audience. Practice keeping your head up. Make eye contact with your audience. Focus on individuals in different areas of the room, looking them directly in the eyes for five to ten seconds.
- 4 Don't trail off at the end of a sentence. Maintain a steady voice at the beginning and at the end of each sentence so that your voice can be heard clearly at the conclusion of each thought.
- 5 Don't overstay your welcome. If you are given ten minutes to speak, stay on schedule. Always leave the audience wanting more, not less. Be sure to practice your speech in advance within the specified time given. On speech day, place your watch on top of or next to the podium to keep track of the time.
- 6 Do not read your script to the audience, especially if your public reading skills are not strong. Instead, try to speak from personal experiences and follow a note card outline with bullet points. Glance down, see your topic, and then focus your attention back to your audience.
- 7 Do not fall into the “uh”, “umm” and “er” trap of filler words. This stall technique makes you sound hesitant and unsure. Take a deep breath. Smile. Now move to the next thought.
- 8 Don't just wing it! Practice Makes Perfect! Your confidence will become stronger and stronger with every speaking engagement. Remember, public speaking is a learned skill that develops over time with patience, practice, and a desire to succeed. Practice your speech with friends and family members. Hold their attention and ask them for honest feedback. Videotape or tape record your presentation and evaluate your delivery, articulation, and speed of speaking.
- 9 Don't apologize to your audience if you make a mistake. They want you to succeed, so relax and speak to them slowly and effectively.
- 10 Don't overuse gestures to emphasize a point. Rather, use gestures convincingly. Instead of locking your elbows at your side, make hand gestures from your shoulder. Half-hearted gestures, crossed arms, and putting your hands into a pocket or behind your back distract your audience from your message.

*“Breathe, visualize a triumphant speech, and relax. It's your message; it's your day. Make it memorable and have fun! Congratulations, now it's your turn to step up to the microphone! You're on your way to successful, effective public speaking. Maintain your own unique delivery style by presenting your material with a natural, conversational flow. Your goal is to create energy through the spoken word and hold the audience's attention, making sure your message is received and understood. Remember to keep it simple. Always know the purpose of your speech, practice, and be prepared. Keep your presentation alive by connecting with the audience and by remaining positive and confident. And most of all, smile, and enjoy your speech.” -Scott Topper Public Speaking Expert*